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ABSTRACT

Derived from the deliberations of the 1969 Superintendents Work Conference, this position paper provides an analysis of the current panorama of social unrest in schools and the community in general. It began with the assessment that student unrest, to be effectively dealt with, must be viewed as emerging from and reflecting the structural, cultural, economic and other characteristics of our society. Schools exacerbate the situation by their repressive rules, their conformity-oriented structure, and their imperviousness to change. Specific approaches are suggested to initiate changes in the relations of schools to students, staff, and the community at large. The focus for change is on three main areas: (1) ideology; (2) organization; and (3) curriculum. The paper concludes with a strategy for change which rests on two basic assumptions: (1) the rights of students must be upheld; and (2) the principles of "due process" and "rule of law" must prevail in schools and society. At bottom, the problem of student unrest was seen as a problem in the management of conflict and change. (TL)

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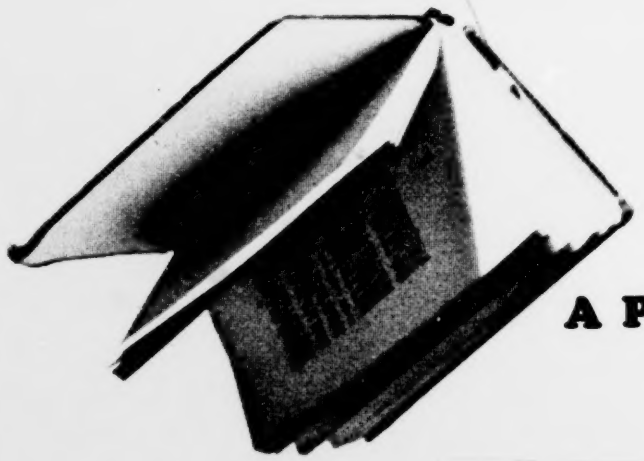
STUDENT UNREST IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS



A Position Paper

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Student Unrest in the High Schools: A Position Paper

by Vincent C. Flemmings

June 1970

Center for Urban Education
105 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016

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Foreword

We are indebted to the Center for Urban Education and to the United States Office of Education for their support of a three-day Forum on Unrest conducted July 9-11, 1969 as part of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Superintendents Work Conference sponsored by Teachers College, Columbia University.

This assistance made it possible for us to bring together a number of distinguished school superintendents from America's larger metropolitan areas, eminent scholars from many disciplines, and outstanding men and women in civic and governmental fields who are knowledgeable of and profoundly concerned about the growing disaffection manifested by the nation's brightest, most promising young people.

Our objective was to survey the panorama of social unrest in school and community, discern, if we could, some inherent cause-and-effect relationships, and examine the means by which the public schools might respond most effectively.

In his perceptive position paper, Vincent C. Flemmings has reflected the deliberations of the Forum and has added his own valuable analysis of the current social situation, as well as practical remedial recommendations which are a consensus of the staff members of the Center for Urban Education who participated in planning the Forum program.

I am confident that this document will prove enormously helpful to superintendents, principals, and indeed, to all adults whose professions bring them in contact with the youth of today.

CARROLL F. JOHNSON, Chairman
Superintendents Work Conference
Professor of Education
Teachers College
Columbia University

Acknowledgments

The assistance and cooperation of colleagues on the Community Development Committee of the Center deserves recognition. Special thanks are due Stanley Lisser, Assistant Director, who not only generously gave me this assignment but also provided some valuable source materials and offered some insightful comments and suggestions at successive stages of the writing. Also, Robert F. Knight, Staff Associate, deserves recognition for his assistance during the writing of the first draft.

Mrs. Jo Ann Booth, assistant to Dr. Johnson, and Mrs. Ruth Dropkin, Senior Editor at the Center, furnished valuable editorial help.

I join with Professor Carroll F. Johnson, Director of the Superintendents Work Conference, Teachers College, Mr. Lisser, and Mr. Knight, who cooperated in planning the special section of the Work Conference, in appreciation of the assistance of Dr. Robert A. Dentler, Director of the Center for Urban Education.

VINCENT C. FLEMMINGS
Senior Staff Associate

Introduction

An indication of the magnitude of student unrest in our schools may be gleaned from the proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Superintendents Work Conference held at Teachers College, Columbia University, July 1969. At that conference, some 60 chief school administrators devoted their sessions to the study of the entire spectrum of unrest as it relates to the educational institution. They sought to find ways and means of becoming more, not less, involved in seeking solutions to the problems that underlie the surge of unrest and rebellion in the schools. They recognized in effect that students do not become restive without cause; moreover, they felt that the cause of such restive behavior may often be traced to defects in the social structure of the school.

While the superintendents were anxious to find quick, effective techniques for defusing disorder before it has time to develop into rebellion, they also considered long-range solutions through new administrative and pedagogical approaches that could revitalize the whole process of public education. Sections III and IV list the major findings and suggestions for dealing with student activism, which developed from the papers and deliberations of the conference.

The quotations that follow are intended to highlight the mood of the conference and to give some indication of the points that were emphasized.

Stephen K. Bailey, a Regent of the State University of New York and Chairman of Syracuse University's Policy Research Corporation, found that one of the main causes of student unrest was the intense pressure exerted by the school on its

students towards blind conformity. "We fear dissent when we should fear conformity," he declared. "We fear the bullying and chicanery of angry students when we should fear the imperial vanities, the hypocrisies, the educational irrelevance and the impersonality of our culture – all the things that exacerbate the normal and healthy differences between young and old."

Speaking in a similar vein, Arthur J. Lewis, Chairman of Educational Administration, Teachers College, urged re-examination of the assumption that the institutions of socialization can operate independently of one another, terming it an "atomistic" approach to socialization. Instead, the alternative should be to assume that effective socialization is the product of home, community, school and peer group working in harmony. The school can foster such coordination, Dr. Lewis held, by relating the curriculum specifically to its own community and its own students.

"Not only should the school attempt to relate its curriculum to the community," said Dr. Lewis, "it should also seek opportunities to work on community concerns with other agencies and institutions. The problems facing ghettos in housing, employment, education, and political control are so complex that no one institution can solve them alone. Only by the concerted effort of all groups can solutions be hoped for and, at the least, the school should be a cooperating partner in community involvement. . . . Schools that are relating their curriculum to the community, and helping the community to solve its problems, are demonstrating the value of an integrated approach to socialization rather than an atomistic one."

The connection between big-city problems and the suburban school system was underlined by Sidney P. Marland, President of the Institute for Educational Development. "Clearly the record shows that the problems deriving from the search for student power are not confined to the cities," he warned. "To the extent that problems attaching to racial differences have been strongly identified with the cities, this condition will very likely change. If the problems of race are not solved in the cities, they will flow to the suburbs." Census figures show, he

noted, that the annual migration rate of black people from city to suburb has increased more than tenfold since 1960.

Though this paper lays no claim to being a formal report of the proceedings of the 1969 Superintendents Work Conference, it is nevertheless against the background of that conference that it is to be understood. It seeks to fulfill the two stated objectives of the conference: first, to examine the causes of unrest in the schools; second, to suggest a set of guidelines that may be helpful in preventing and/or resolving conflict situations involving students.

The Anatomy Of Student Unrest

The current student unrest in our high schools has generated much concern among educational administrators, teachers, legislators, and most other adults. There are those who view the situation with alarm and see sinister motives behind student activism. An example of this alarm is seen in the following statement:

> Until recently spontaneous and without form, the more contemporary student movements are now rather precisely tooled, a battering ram to test and then destroy the "establishment."[1]

On the other hand, there are individuals and groups who, while recognizing the gravity of the situation, view student activism as possessing the seeds of needed change and progress. We give an example of this second viewpoint:

> The acceleration of technological discovery and achievement, the widening gap between the sciences and the humanities, the impatience of youth for reform, and the frequently sluggish response of those with vested interest in the status quo are factors which severely strain all institutions, especially the public schools, charged as they are with the responsibility to inform fully, appraise candidly and guide wisely. Yet from challenge comes change and from change, progress.[2]

These two viewpoints regarding the problem of student unrest are not only radically different, the one from the other, they also illustrate rather urgently the sharp and enlightening distinction that C. Wright Mills drew between "private troubles of milieu" and "public social issues."[3]

Private troubles are situations in which it may be justified

to hold an individual responsible for his condition because it is evidently the outcome of his own deficiency, moral or biological. It is never difficult to find cases of private trouble. Every school administrator encounters them every day among both staff and students. If only a few students in a school, for example, were involved in creating disturbance or disruption, that doubtless would be an instance of private trouble and could be dealt with as such. The act or acts of disturbance could be treated as unacceptable behavior for which the students involved would be held responsible as individuals.

However, when we find large numbers of students engaging in such behavior on a large scale, as is the case today, then the situation can no longer be viewed as private trouble; it is clearly a public social issue, i.e., a social problem. The unusual behavior of students evidently stems from some unredressed grievance shared in common. The widespread and systemic trouble in a social institution like the school can no longer justifiably be explained in terms of the character traits or failings of the individuals involved. The proper question school administrators should address themselves to is not "What kind of student is the activist?" but rather, "What kinds of social situations are likely to develop into unrest?"

The private troubles approach, by focusing on the individual and his characteristics, stamps the student activist as a person who is antisocial, who seeks to disrupt the social order simply because he is maladjusted and has rejected the middle-class values on which our society is built. He is considered to be misguided, irresponsible, and resistant to properly constituted authority.

This simplistic, individualistic interpretation largely ignores the social context of human behavior. It fails to take note of the fact that "the life-situations, adjustments, and circumstances of our young people emerge from and reflect . . . the structural, cultural, economic, and other characteristics of our society."[4] Unfortunately, however, this viewpoint persists among educators and many other adults in places where decisions are made and laws are written. One reason for this is that our middle-class value system tends to stress obedience,

conformity, and order. It is, therefore, somewhat difficult for us to entertain the idea that grave defects could really be found in the social structure.

In criticizing the private troubles perspective, Richard Cloward has pointed out that it tends to preserve the status quo because it functions to "deflect criticism from the social order and focus it upon the presumed moral, social, or psychological defects of the people implicated in various problems."[5] The general adult response to student unrest would seem to validate Cloward's criticism. The response, so far, has ranged from Congressional approval for the withdrawal of scholarships and other financial aid to the imposition by educators of punitive measures and repressive regimens. There has been no serious adult consensus committed to basic reform of the social structure of the school.

The social problems perspective, on the other hand, would enable us to examine student behavior in its social setting. From this view, student unrest is not so much the behavior of maladjusted individuals as the response, on a large scale, to social conditions existing within the school. The appropriate question is: "What is wrong with our schools, with the educational process as it now functions, that causes students to rise up in protest?"

The distressing fact is that so very few administrators seem willing to face up to that question squarely and honestly. For the most part, they seem to have learned so far very little, if anything, from the student unrest. Consequently, they tend to view student activists mainly as rebels. In reality, it would seem that the students started out intending to be innovative, but have been driven into rebellion by overreaction on the part of many principals and superintendents.

An example of such overreaction may be seen in the statement of the High School Principals Association (mentioned in Footnote 1). The statement defined student activists as members of the "New Left," and listed a set of guidelines for handling student unrest, from which we quote below without comment.

Insist on a written statement of demands.

Insist on 1-2 days for study.

Use trusted staff to subdivide the anonymous mass into smaller, identifiable, more rational groups.

a. Isolate the radical leadership from their followers.
b. Take appropriate, forthright action.

To avoid psychological harassment and to insure a proper balance, the principal should be joined by 3-5 representative staff members. Your secretary or a tape recorder should record statements for future reference.

Request time to consult and respond. . . .
. . . Main A.S.P.A. guidlines. . . . Request police barriers to prevent demonstrators from interfering with normal operations.

To those principals whose schools have not yet experienced student unrest, some specific advice is given, for example:

The New Left leadership, trained in a hard and determined school, are masters of organized disruption.

Anticipate the mood of your student body, the demands of the militants. Determine your posture in advance, not in the shrill atmosphere of charge and countercharge. The demands are predictable and predictable demands are subject to preplanned responses. . . . properly assess the ultimate objective of the New Left. . . . its leaders are programmed for total social disruption.

The reader can readily foresee the disastrous consequences of the approach suggested by these guidelines.

Student Unrest As A Social Problem

In viewing student unrest as a social problem, the conference paid scant attention to psychological interpretations that would attribute this unrest mainly to the personality problems of individual students. Neither did the participants seem inclined to accept the "generation gap" theory that would trace student activism to the inability of students and their elders (i.e., teachers and school administrators) to communicate. Some kind of gap beween the generations is a constant of the human condition; it is hardly plausible that the current phenomenon of student unrest has suddenly sprung from this gap.

It is much more likely that some of our traditional rules and regulations have outlived their usefulness and are now actually pushing some students toward deviant, or non-conforming behavior.. Merton summarized this viewpoint in his famous "means-ends theory" when he said that "social structures (in this case the school) exert a definite pressure upon certain persons to engage in nonconforming rather than conforming conduct."[6]

The conference proceeded to examine the ways in which nonconforming behavior (e.g., student activism) derives from the nature and operation of the social system of the school.

In specific reference to minority group high school students, but with equal relevance for others, Professor Dan Dodson, New York University, noted that:

1. The school system is a handmaiden of the power structure in the social order. It works well when its power base is not challenged, but falters when that base is fragmented

or when there are shifts in power.

2. Seeking to maintain the status quo, the power structure cries for "law and order." This cry reveals its basic insecurity.

3. The power structure rationalizes its failure to meet its obligations to the powerless, by stating that such failure lies in the human potential and not in the system. Hence, the use of such cliches as "low I.Q.," "weak ego strength," "lack of father image with which to relate," "cultural deprivation," etc.

4. Since the schools are mortgaged to the power structure (and therefore function to preserve the status quo, eschewing conflict), they always seek to work through integrative processes. These tend to result in mental health approaches that engage an army of counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and so forth. The schools do not know how to work through conflict. Further, conflict and confrontation tactics will continue to plague social institutions, including education, until they legitimize their role in the lives of every segment of the community.

Professor Dodson concluded by pointing out the need for greater emphasis on: human relations skills; honesty in scholarship; new approaches to school-community relations; the search for ways to shield children from the "pressure cooker" type school experience which deprives them of their childhood; a balance between the present stress on the cognitive and those human needs that are reflected in the affective and the creative.

Professor Edmund Gordon, Teachers College, Columbia, underlined the conference participants' commitment to the social problem approach when he declared that the general state of revolt among students, among blacks, and among the dispossessed, "is caused by contradictions in the social and economic structure and the system of values which are dominant in the society at large." The participants agreed with him that the student movement in schools is first and foremost a political and social movement.

Young people, it was pointed out, are faced with three options: the military draft, further schooling, and unemployment or inferior employment. Between 1960 and 1965, the defense-education complex *alone* absorbed two-thirds of the 18- to 24-year-old group of potential entrants to the labor force. At the same time, those who dropped out of school in order to find a job were faced with an unemployment rate three times higher than those age 25 and over.

Attention was also called to the fact that adolescents today are not without their share of the stresses, strains, contradictions, and enigmas of American life which plague their elders. But as Grambs points out, adolescents are not supposed to be concerned about these problems and pressures; as a general rule, the adolescent may be seen, but not heard.[7] Such disregard for the opinions, feelings, energies, and talents of youth and the general reluctance to permit real involvement of adolescents in the affairs of society have stimulated the growth of a sub-society of adolescents. This society has a culture of its own — its own styles of dress and behavior, its own values and norms. In the face of adult ambivalence toward (and/or fear of) him, the adolescent turns to his own world. In this world he knows and is known in turn; he finds acceptance among his fellows.

In further reference to Grambs we may note that on the one hand this separate culture is a response by adolescents to the way society has treated them and on the other, it is an attempt to cope with the problems of growing up in the modern world — exchanging the ways of childhood for those of maturity.[8] At this point, the participants asked the question, "Is the school a helper or a hindrance in the growth to maturity?" The answer to this should be found in the school's educational objectives.

According to Terry Barton, former co-director of the Affective Education Research Project in Philadelphia:

> There are two sections to almost every school's statement of educational objectives — one for real, and one for show. The first, the real one, talks about academic excellence, subject mastery, and getting into college or a job. The

> other discusses the human purpose of the school – values, feelings, personal growth, the full and happy life. It is included because everyone knows that it is important, and that it ought to be central to the life of every school. But it is only for show. Everyone knows how little schools have done about it.[9]

Barton's statement regarding the real educational objectives of the school has general support. The values of the school, which are also the dominant values of our society, stress individual achievement and competition. This emphasis has been a positive motivating force for some students; it has created stress and strain among others. Those who cannot or will not achieve according to the school's standards become casualties of the system who respond through such processes as resentment, damaged self-esteem, organized opposition, or, as we are witnessing today, rebellion.

Some participants seemed to believe that students resent the general orientation of the school's curriculum to college admission requirements and to the needs of employers, reflecting a purely utilitarian view of education. The school's programs are evaluated in terms of the number of graduates who get into college; students are pressured to do well in school in order to do well in the world of work. Students, in effect, are forced to place the quest for good grades above the quest for learning.

Students feel that concurrently with a strong emphasis on measurable, "acceptable" performance, there has been a gross neglect of other goals that are basic to a desirable educational climate. These goals, which would enhance the personal growth and development of students as mature individuals, are what Barton refers to as the school's objectives "for show."

Furthermore, if one can give credence to student complaints, many students believe schools deliberately play upon student fear and insecurity in order to maintain order and obedience. Countless students cite these tactics as the source of their resentment, alienation, and withdrawal from the system.

An additional source of unrest may be the confusion resulting from contradictions inherent in the value-system of

the school, contradictions that, in turn, reflect the contradictions existing in the larger society. For example, there is the emphasis on competition on the one hand, and on cooperation, on the other. Students are taught that learning how to cooperate in groups (such as teams) is essential to success in the adult world, where the implicit slogan is: "Every man for himself."

As a result, some students find themselves caught between their own drive to excel and their commitment to ideals of cooperation and equality. Moreover, the school preaches individualism, but its methods and its organization conspire to retard the development of autonomous behavior, initiative, and independence, all of which are necessary elements of individualism. In actuality, the student who is most likely to succeed in school is the one who conforms, who gives the "correct" answers — the answers expected by the teacher. Those who give answers which may be "original" or "different" (i.e., not from the book) are discouraged. Hence diversity, creativity, and imaginativeness are stunted.

A look at some of the charges made by students[10] will give us a glimpse into their frustrations and alienation.

1. Schools compel students to be dishonest. To be "successful" it is necessary for students to learn to suppress and hide feelings; they must disregard ideas they have discovered will not be acceptable. In place of honest thoughts and ideas, they have to substitute others, however dishonest, which experience has shown will enable them to "succeed." They find that the application of the reward-and-punishment system, through the awarding of grades, etc., encourages this type of dishonesty.
2. Students soon find out what types of answers are likely to win favor. In other words, they soon find out how school works; so they ask themselves: "What kind of answer will the teacher accept? What should I write to please the teacher?"
3. Conformity and blind obedience to authority will get you through school as a "model" student. However, self-expression and honest reaction will get you into trouble since you would be "stepping out of line."
4. Students are exposed to a narrow range of ideas. The

textbooks give only a limited perspective; also teacher attitudes, as well as curriculum, condition students to accept the familiar and reject the unfamiliar or foreign. Curiosity is stifled; thus students lose their eagerness to learn.

5. Schools help to foster local prejudices by remaining aloof from ideas that are not in harmony with those of the surrounding community. Students feel that it is in the free exchange of ideas and life-styles that it is possible for them to overcome ethnocentrism.

6. Students discover that the curriculum is irrelevant in that it is divorced from life, as life is being experienced. — Young people say that they want to learn about themselves, about the world of work, and of life around them, and how to cope with the moral and other problems that they face.

There seems to be substantial justification for many of the foregoing student assertions. The paper by the Student Alliance was known to some of the Conference participants. Professor Stephen Bailey, Syracuse University, remarked that a system marked by great inequities is bound to experience unrest; and further it is conformity rather than dissent that we should fear. Two incidents, from the many that could be cited, will suffice to give substance to these charges. They are indicative of the high incidence of violations of students' rights — of procedural, personal, as well as of First Amendment rights.

A biology teacher in a New York City high school, reading from a memorandum he had received, informed his sophomore students that all members of the class were eligible to enroll in a course in experimental biology in their junior year. He stated that the course could be taken either for full major credit (i.e., for a year) or for half major credit (i.e., for one semester), depending on the needs of individual students. Several students went through the routine registration procedures, which included having a permission card signed by the chairman of the department.

At the beginning of the course, the instructor made notations on the card of each student taking the course for full major credit. The same procedures were followed at the

close of the semester in the case of those students continuing the course for the second semester, in order to earn full credit. However, sometime during the latter half of the spring semester, the students were informed by the teacher that full credit could no longer be given for the course. This decision, relayed without further information, meant that the students were devoting a semester to work for which no credit would be given; moreover, not even the grades earned would be recognized.

The parents of some of the students tried to have the matter resolved by contacting the administrative assistant in the school. She referred them to the principal who, in turn, referred them to the assistant superintendent. The latter sent them back to the principal who, they were told, had the authority to resolve the problem. In the end, after much delay, the parents were told that if the decision were to be reversed, it was very likely that the new information that had to be given would confuse the computer at the City College. Consequently, only one half credit could be given to the students.

The second incident is even more serious. With his graduation only a few weeks away, a youth (we will call him John Brown) had the temerity to engage in a minor altercation with a teacher. At the very worst, the incident appears to have consisted of some degree of discourtesy and rudeness on both sides and could well have been dismissed as such. However, later in the day, John Brown was suspended in arbitrary fashion, and told to go home until further notice.

Twelve days later, a notice was mailed from the school to Brown's foster mother, informing her of a "guidance conference," which was to be held eight days from the date of the notice. Brown, having been unable to persuade his foster mother to attend the hearing (which the "guidance conference" really was) went alone; but he arrived 45 minutes late, only to discover that the hearing was held "in absentia," that he was already adjudged guilty of several unspecified charges, and expelled from school. This happened to a boy who was a good student, had never been in trouble before, and who

had been accepted for college.

The arbitrary action of the school was in defiance of:

1. The New York City Board of Education's own rule, which states that a child who is being suspended must be kept in school until a parent is notified by the principal.

2. School Board regulations, which state that a principal has authority to suspend a child only for five days; and that a "guidance conference" with prior notification to the parent by certified mail, must be held within the five days.

3. State law, which gives to students the right to be represented (even by a lawyer if they wish) at hearings arising out of suspensions of more than five days. The school had denied the requests of two interested parents, who had sought permission to attend the hearing as friends of Brown. It was Brown's good fortune that one of the parents did not permit the matter to end at that point. This mother contacted a lawyer at the New York Civil Liberties Union, and a suit was filed in federal court. The school was ordered to have Brown reinstated without prejudice.

In order to discover that these are not isolated incidents, one has only to contact such agencies as the Citizens Committee for Children, Mobilization For Youth, the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, or any one of several parents' associations. Moreover, those incidents are by no means peculiar to the New York City school system; they are replicated in many cities throughout the country.

Arbitrary decisions and actions like these, accompanied by rigid, unbending attitudes, represent sources of strain in the educational structure, thereby motivating many students to view the school in negative terms. What is tragic is not only that these attitudes and actions permeate all areas of the educational process but that the procedures by which such decisions are governed and enforced can be undertaken in such a routine, matter-of-fact fashion by the school.

Findings from a number of studies support Professor Gordon's contention that the educational environment provided by the school leaves much to be desired.

In "The Modern High School: A Profile," Friedenberg[11] criticizes the school's tendency to treat adolescents as infants and to serve the community by seeing to it that the "kind of people who get ahead" are those who will support the system. In the schools he studied, Friedenberg noted the excessive and unnecessary restrictions imposed on students. Students in some cases were so regimented that they could not even walk down the corridor without a form signed by a teacher. Even the lavatories were kept locked, in one particular school, except during class breaks. In other respects, the findings of Friedenberg substantiates student complaints noted earlier, namely, the atmosphere of control, distrust, and punishment. The truth is: if the way these students are treated is any indication, then to be an adolescent means not only to be continuously reminded that one is a minor and therefore immature and irresponsible, but also that one is without rights.

Such writers as Kenneth Kenniston, Paul Goodman, and John Platt point to the pervasive alienation and dissatisfaction among high school youth. These writers indicate that students feel that they come to school to learn, but receive only grades; that no one listens to them; and that even in those instances where they try to work through channels to have their grievances redressed, the resultant dialogue is used by administrators as a "stalling" process in order to maintain the status quo. There is ample evidence that administrators have indeed "played for time," knowing that troublesome student leaders will soon be out of school and that it will take some time for new leadership to emerge. By the time new leaders become sufficiently knowledgeable to deal with the issues and problems, they too will have graduated. Hence, old problems remain unresolved, and new ones develop.

Another source of great irritation to students is the fact that so many decisions affecting their lives and futures are made solely by the school; sometimes, not even their parents are in-

formed. Many of those decisions flow from the sorting process by which, for example, students are placed in so-called homogenous groups and onto separate tracks such as college preparatory, general, vocational, and so on. Thus, students are labeled "bad," "good," "average," or "inferior," and the labels stick — through college and into the world of work.

Recordkeeping is another sore point. In the student's file is placed a mass of information: his grades, suspensions, clinic referrals, special testing, facts about the family, incidents involving teachers. Often the record is used as a lever to keep the student in line (i.e., it may be used as a threat). The most trivial infraction may be included in his permanent record to follow him all through his working years.

These are some of the things that "bug" students. They have discovered that the schools, as constituted, are unwilling or unable to effect reasonable change. Moreover, students have found that confrontation seems to be the only message school administrators seem able to understand. (Even the acting president of City College has admitted recently to a Senate Committee that it was the handful of activists that prodded his school into implementing important and needed educational reforms.)

Several participants expressed much concern over, and saw great danger in, attempts to repress demands for social change. In this connection, Professor Arthur Lewis, Teachers College, Columbia University, expressed the feelings of the conference when he stated that repressive action may appear expedient, since our society has entered a stage of reaction to protest. However, he went on to state that by employing "authoritarian techniques" and by placing heavy reliance on the police and the military, our society has begun to undermine a basic construct of the democratic system, namely, the right and obligation of the people to express their opinion, however outrageous.

The position taken by the conference may be summed up thus:

1. It is a delusion to characterize student unrest as the

machination of a few malcontents, who are bent on wrecking our educational institution, and, perhaps, the social structure as well.

2. It is vitally necessary to take a hard look not only at our educational institutions, but at other social institutions as well, in an effort to see wherein we have shortchanged the young.

3. The exercise of repressive measures will compound, rather than solve, the problem of student activism.

4. If genuine disaffection with the educational process (as it is now structured and operated) did not exist on a large scale, the student activists would not be enlisting such extensive support.

5. The schools are structures of authority in which reliance is placed on suspensions, expulsions, and other forms of discipline, in order to mold the individual to fit into the system.

6. The schools are impervious to change, excepting change that is inconsequential.

7. The present set-up of education can be efficacious only in a structure of authority.
have experienced repeated rebuffs at the hands of
8. Students resort to confrontation only after they have experienced repeated rebuffs at the hands of administrators. In other words, they have no alternative but to revolt.

What was very noticeable in the attitude of all participants was a willingness to try to understand what the student activists are saying. There was evident uncertainty as to what exactly should be done; however, everyone seemed certain that there can be no delay in the task of redefining and reshaping the role of the school in our urbanized society.

The Positive Approach

To deal constructively with the problem of student activism, school administrators should look not only at the things students are "against"; they should also try to discover what things students are "for." Very often important principles are involved, and the students' position may actually be the valid position. To see student activists only as antagonists can lead to further polarization which inevitably precipitates confrontation and conflict.

As already noted, some administrators have tended to overreact to student activism. But instances can be cited to show that those adminisrators who have treated activism as something that is basically healthy have escaped embarrassing experiences and violent encounters with student activists. If student activists are viewed as "innovators" who are seeking ways and means by which their school experience can be made more meaningful, then administrators will discover in such activism unexpected opportunities for making their schools better.

What are some of the things students are "for"? While students state very clearly the things they are against, they also speak up quite strongly for:

1. *Honesty:* They are upset by the dishonesty in our educational policies and goals as well as in our national policies and goals. In short, these students are disillusioned by the hypocrisy of the age.

2. *Social Justice:* They are for a "fair shake" for everybody, including minority groups. They want to see an end to chronic poverty, racial discrimination, and other forms of social injustice.

3. *Real Democracy:* They want to see a closer match between "ideals" and "practice." They are for democratic procedures in school operations; a school government that involves them in the decision-making process, especially in those decisions that will have important consequences for their future.

4. *Education:* They want their education to be a gratifying experience. They want changes in the curriculum to make it more relevant, more meaningful, more related to life as it is lived.

5. *A Clear View of the Future:* They want assurance that they will have a fair chance to achieve the economic and social goals which have been held up to them.

The students are saying that they have rights which should be recognized. They are reminding us that the school, to a degree not possible even in the home, is the environment in which students should have the opportunity to participate in democratic processes. School, they tell us, is the place to acquire an understanding of the rights, as well as the responsibilities, of living in a democratic society. And outstanding among these rights are freedom of speech, assembly, and dissent under a government by law. The students warn us, however, that without justice, and without due process, the law becomes tyranny and oppression.

Some Suggested Approaches

In order that student unrest be forestalled or resolved before an impasse develops, school administrators should take steps to initiate changes in the relations of the school with its staff, its students, and the community at large. We list the main approaches, derived from the proceedings at the conference.

To Students:

1. More emphasis on human relations skills as power arrangements change.

2. More honesty in scholarship; teachers should join with students in re-examining the mythologies of scholarship.

3. Revised curricula to provide a more realistic and inclusive

understanding of our culture and to relate to the needs of the particular community and the students.

4. Revitalized student government so that the political process will redistribute power within the school.

5. Revised grouping practices to avoid the self-fulfilling prophecy and to motivate the individual child. The schools must cease to see themselves as the "melting pot" which assimilates all children into the dominant (white middle class) culture; a pluralistic response is needed for a pluralistic culture.

6. Conflict appears to be emerging as a permanent fact of life for this particular era as minority groups assert themselves and attempt to capture enough power to make themselves effective in the socio-political processes. Therefore, the schools must institutionalize conflict by establishing regularized channels for confrontation, as the laws of the land have done in the case of labor-management relations. This implies:

a. provision for majority representation, duly and periodically elected, of students, teachers, and parents.

b. procedures by which board and administration will negotiate with the duly elected representatives of each of the aforementioned groups, and through which an orderly and workable redistribution of power can be effected.

c. awareness of the effect of size on the ability to integrate student bodies racially and socioeconomically, and the implications of size in encouraging peaceful, institutionalized confrontation as opposed to violent, nondemocratic seizure by radical minority groups.

d. recognition of the fact that confrontation may be necessary in order to bring about changes in society, and of the distinction between "good" confrontation and "bad" confrontation. "Good" confrontation could be defined as that stemming from a conviction of the majority and aimed at a revision and/or improvement of the existing order, in the school or in the community. "Bad" confrontation could be defined as violent and nonrepresentative in nature, aimed at separatism and the total destruction of existing social institutions. Police and security guards are not the answer.

To Schools:

1. New and additional ways to activate, articulate and guide the participation of all the people it serves. The school must coordinate its approaches and activties with those of the family and the total community; the institutions of socialization cannot work independently of one another. The schools, working with other socializing agencies, should aim at enhancing ability, increasing intelligence and developing interests. IQ and achievement tests should not become the instruments of stereotyping and the self-fulfilling prophecy. If a child fails, the assumption should be that some type of learning experience should be designed for him so that he may yet succeed.

2. School as a cooperating partner in community programs to solve housing, employment, and political problems.

3. Decentralization of large school systems into units that are manageable – from 10,000 to 25,000 pupils. (Schools, too, could be divided into sub-schools.) There could be, for instance, an elected community board of education to operate each decentralized unit, and for each school there could be an advisory committee composed of parents, students and teachers. Such a committee would identify and interpret community needs to the school, assist the school in establishing goals and priorities consistent with community needs, identify sources within the community that might contribute to the educative process, and periodically, assess the school's effectiveness.

4. Adult education to make adults employable in a changing technology, and early childhood programs to take advantage of the mental development which occurs between the ages of two and five years, should be instituted by all school systems.

5. Consideration of building design, size, and location as factors that definitely influence student behavior, affect achievement and motivation, and, in some instances, make the difference between order and disorder. Building design and location also affect the relationship of school and community.

To Community:

1. Community interaction (more than mere public information or public relations) with participation of staff and students.

2. Acknowledgment rather than denial of difficulties. Help the community understand the basis of unrest in students and staff.

3. Recruitment and enlistment of those interested in lay participation in the schools.

4. Council of board members in several school districts to influence appropriate legislation.

5. Awareness of the desire for community control; advisory committee at each school; accountability to the community for the entire school program.

6. More effective and extensive use of school facilities; formal programs for adult education.

7. Awareness that the schools are for all the students (more than one public is being served).

8. Overall community cooperation and coordination of all community agencies.

9. In-service programs for entire staff (professional, non-professional).

10. Development of effective discussions rather than dramatic confrontations.

To Staff:

1. Development of policies and procedures pertaining to lines of communications between administration, faculty, students, and community, with plans for their implementation.

2. Involvement in the planning process for staff members prior to final decision making.

3. A revision of teacher training programs to include in-depth study in the areas of unrest.

4. Development of local advisory councils which are composed of all segments of the school community. The implementation of the recommendations of these councils must be accepted by the members as well as responsibility for the assessment, accountability and results of actions taken.

5. Extension of the school operation to a full year with proportionate financial remuneration and other benefits.

6. Measurement of faculty members' effectiveness to determine salary, assignment, retention, etc.

7. Selection of faculty members and in-service training program

to staff school with teachers who are sensitive and can establish rapport with students.

8. Trust may be established by firm, fair, open and honest approaches in the administration of established school policy.

The conference guidelines that emerged from these suggested approaches recommend change in three areas: ideology, organization, and curriculum.

Ideological Change

A. Redefine: (1) the role of the school; (2) its prescribed goals; (3) its custodial responsibility. (Recent court decisions imply that due process and civil rights must be fully extended to children and adolescents. The concept of "in loco parentis" must be reexamined in light of this litigation.)

B. Discard the traditional "melting-pot" theory. The proper function of the public schools is not to remake all children in the middleclass WASP model. There are fundamental cultural differences among ethnic and racial groups. Such differences stem from basic values of the various groups and are closely related to the identity of the group and the individual who is a member thereof. Ethnic, racial, and socio-economic group characteristics can enrich the total culture and should be recognized and respected.

The question which educators must face and answer is: What is the aim of public education today? Is the objective immediate — i.e., solely to equip the child with skills and techniques which will make him employable and productive; or is the objective also transcendent — i.e., to stimulate intellectual and emotional development so that the student, as he matures, is continuously learning how to participate effectively in the community of men with resultant satisfaction to himself and to his fellows — in other words, to become a fully developed, responsible human being?

Our schools in this generation must ensure that the ideal of individualism be sustained at the same time that they prepare students to relate to the modern mass corporate society. The manner in which this task is met will determine, in part, the nature of the future social order.

As Charles Frankel states it: The revolution of modernity has not been only a material revolution or an intellectual one exclusively. It has been a moral revolution of extraordinary scope, a radical alteration in what the human

imagination is prepared to envisage and demand. The basic dimensions by which we measure happiness or unhappiness, success and failure have changed. We have been given a sense that we can make our own history; it has led us to impose new and more exacting demands on ourselves and our leaders. It has created a restless vision of a world in which men might be liberated from age-old burdens and come to set their own standards and govern their own lives.[12]

Organizational Change

A. Provide for a degree of student autonomy. Human beings learn through making mistakes, as well as by rote or by the example of their elders. Complete autonomy for students is obviously impractical, but all students should have ample opportunity to exercise initiative and to experiment. Structural mechanisms for providing optimum student autonomy should take into account the fact that mistakes will be made, and should be flexible enough to absorb such mistakes, so long as the safety of the group and the individual is protected.

There is ample evidence that our schools are, more often than not, characterized by rigid lines of authority which are tenaciously maintained. This rigid authority often alienates students, not because they are resentful of authority as such, but because they find it suffocating and hence, frustrating. Reflections of the prevalence of an authoritarian school atmosphere may be seen in the teacher's perception that his role demands strict adherence to a specific curriculum plan and schedule, in the principal's inability, or unwillingness, to implement new program proposals, and in the general apathy that often prevails among the students.

B. Democratize the schools. Students should participate in decision making, especially in making these decisions which will affect their own lives in school, out of school, and after they have completed their formal schooling. Any school system can arrange for students to sit with faculty curriculum and standards committees, share in setting dress and conduct codes, and otherwise take part in the process of policy development. Student government should be genuine – i.e., an educational and practical experience in which all students participate to some extent, one which is broadly representative and which will prepare young people to undertake seriously and competently the responsibilities of adult citizenship.

On of the suggestions in the *Montgomery County Student Study* was that the administrators should encourage and allow teachers to relax some of the regulatory restrictions on students in an attempt to create greater flexibility in matters of class transfers, in areas of independent study, in the formulation of goals for specific courses of study, in the determination of activities and powers to be delegated to student governments.

It has also been suggested that a design for student government should grow out of what students themselves articulate through forums, discussions, and other self-directed activities, and that the role for administration and faculty should remain strictly advisory. One of the factors that was pointed out at the conference was that even though most thoughtful administrators condemn the "excesses committed by rebellious students, they will in the same breath pay tribute to their 'idealism' and their sense of commitment."

Curriculum Change

A. Reform or revise grouping procedures. Grouping should not be a machanism for invidious status differentation. Closely linked to grouping procedures are the schools' recording practices. Too many unnecessary and damaging items are too frequently and too arbitrarily incorporated in the student's permanent record, which follows him throughout his working life.

B. Make curriculum relevant to the student's own life experience and to the larger world in which he will live as an adult.

C. Take account of emotional needs. Industry has seen the importance of recognizing that workers need to achieve recognition and personal satisfaction over and above wages and salaries, and many industrial and business corporations maintain mechanisms for meeting those needs, sometimes even when they conflict with organizational goals such as profit and unit productivity.

Strategy For Change

The Center for Urban Education presents these additional guidelines (not to replace, but to enlarge on those from the conference) suggesting a way to implement orderly change in the ideology, organization and curriculum of the public schools. The recommended strategy is predicted on two basic assumptions:

1. That the rights of students be upheld, and, by implication, that students be reminded of the corresponding responsibilities arising from those rights.

2. That the principles of "due process" and "rule of law" be made to prevail in the schools and in society. This is particularly important in view of the direction in which the courts seem to be moving in matters regarding students' rights.

Consensus Instead of Conflict

School administrators should act to prevent student activism from developing into student unrest. This can be done by the adoption of a consensus rather than a conflict approach. The consensus approach seeks to find areas of agreement between students and administration, so as to enable both sides to discover issues that are negotiable. In this way, a compromise can often be reached; for, as a rule, there will be some students' demands that will be found reasonable and, therefore, acceptable to administrators. We suggest that administrators try to be flexible; they should not overreact by "boxing" themselves into an absolute position from which

they cannot retreat without losing face. Such hard-line, conflict strategy will result only in driving students to enlarge the scope of their demands, and in bringing negotiations to an impasse.

A consensus approach would tend to give students a positive attitude toward the school administration. If a compromise is reached on those issues which are negotiable, the majority of the students, who are normally moderate in their demands, will be somewhat satisfied. The position of the extremists will be weakened thereby. Students generally, would come to view the administration as, at least, willing to "talk things over." Furthermore, a major dividend would result from the consensus approach: students would be gaining vital experience in the processes and techniques of collective bargaining.

Freedom of Speech and Assembly

Students should have freedom to hear, express, and discuss opposing and controversial points of view. If education is to fulfill its true function then the school should provide the setting in which a student will learn that no matter how noble an idea or tradition may seem, if it is to be valid it must stand up to questioning, i.e., to testing. It is through exposure to opposing and controversial ideas that students will be helped to maturity.

It cannt be overemphasized that the ideas which have contributed most to the advancement of human life have been for the most part the controversial ideas – ideas which when first promulgated created much uneasiness among men. Therefore, we suggest that the selection of books, pamphlets, and other educational materials, should not be left to the discretion, whim, fancy, of any one individual, but should be determined on the basis of policy formally known to all, including students.

There should also be the freedom to publish controversial material in the student paper. We recognize that the freedom to print also involves the acceptance of responsibility for the

printed word. Our view is that the student paper is an important medium through which students can learn to be creative, exercise initiative, and to develop judgment. We feel that school administrators should not seek to "control" the student paper. In fact, it would be a good thing to encourage more than one student paper, so that a variety of viewpoints may be expressed through competing media.

The view we are emphasizing under this suggested guideline is that student publications can be effective learning devices. Effective learning does not occur in situations where every step in the process is prescribed, or "arranged," for the learner. Real learning takes place when the learner is allowed to make his mistakes, to have them challenged, and to respond in kind.

We would like to call attention to the fact that while the specific issue of censorship of student publications has not reached the courts as yet, in the case of Dickey v. Alabama State Board of Education, a federal court ordered the readmission of the student editor of a college newspaper. The student had been suspended for ignoring a ban on student editorials which were "critical of the Government of the State of Alabama or the Alabama Legislature."

We also suggest that a guest speaker should not be banned from the school because he may be a controversial figure; nor should a student be penalized for expressing opinions that are distasteful to the faculty. Apart from giving advice and opinions on style, appropriateness for the occasion, length of speech (and insuring that it is free of slander), teachers should not have the power to censor the ideas expressed.

It would engender confidence and trust in the school administration if students are made aware that it is school policy not to record student opinions. This means that information regarding a student's values and opinions would not be made available to individuals or groups outside the school. The school is a learning laboratory; students should feel assured that it is not a branch of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Student organizations, whether political, social, recreational, or educational, should be free. There should be no restrictions on membership other than those defined by the purposes of the

organization (e.g., a Biology Club may have as a requirement for membership, one or two years of Biology) . The school would provide the necessary assistance for the organization and operation of the club.

School administrators would do well to note that their powers are no longer unlimited. The courts have begun to make breaches into the "in loco parentis" concept. The courts appear to agree that the students have as many rights as adults.

1. Students will be upheld in their rights to demonstrate without clearance from school authorities, unless it can be proved beyond reasonable doubt that such demonstration detracted (or will detract) from the educational atmosphere. A demonstration that is orderly, and takes place *after* school is out, will be ruled by the courts as not even remotely interfering with school activities. We call attention to the case of Hammond v. South Carolina State College in which a college rule prohibiting parades and demonstrations without clearance was declared to be invalid. Since the courts seem to be according high school pupils the same rights as adults the findings of this case are apropos.
2. If the student is in attendance at the school, he will be upheld by the courts as having the right to distribute handbills and other printed materials, as long as he does so outside of class periods, and does not create litter or otherwise endanger the health and safety of fellow students.
3. There are indications that the wearing and displaying of armbands, buttons, badges, etc., is protected under the right to freedom of expression.

If court decisions convey any lesson to school officials, it is this: that they would do well to move cautiously. In Burnside v. Byers, a federal court expressed the opinion that high school officials should have been ordered to desist from enforcing their ban on freedom buttons. It is therefore quite possible that if the matter should go to court, a federal judge may declare that a student's dress or hairstyle is not the concern of the school.

Student Government

We have stressed the need for the practice of true democracy within the school. To this end there are certain rights which may be specified and protected within the organizational structure of the student government.

The so-called student council has not, in the past, been endowed with the capabilities to function as an educational device. It is usually developed by a sponsor, who acts on the premise that the students are lacking in the ability to organize the council themselves. Also, it is the popular ones among the middle and upper middle class students who usually get elected to the council, and who run the show. The sponsor keeps them busy raising money for the school.

If the student council is to provide a learning experience, and student government is to be genuine, then the sponsor's role should be merely supportive, and definitely not directive. The council should be organized and run by the students themselves. There should be a written constitution, drawn up by the students themselves, which outlines the scope, the organization, and functioning of the student government. In all of this, the sponsor should function only as a resource person. The constitution should be strictly observed; changes and amendments being made according to proper parliamentary procedure.

There should be no restrictions on participation in the student government. Being a student in the school should be the *sole* criterion for having the right to vote and/or hold office. This means that all levels of ability, as well as social strata, among the students should be represented. All qualifications for holding office (as well as procedure for selecting officers) should be spelled out in the constitution and by-laws. In all matters strict parliamentary rules should prevail.

The student government should be free of faculty control, in the sense that students should not be penalized in any manner for taking actions or positions on issues which are not in accord with the views of faculty or administration. However, where the administration has the power to veto

the actions of student government, there ought to exist some built-in checks and balances, in order to protect students against the arbitrary use of the power, i.e., hearing before an adjudication committee, school board or independent group.

In the case of Evanston Township High School in Evanston, Illinois, student complaints regarding the imposition of the broad-based Behavior and Dress Codes set by the administration resulted in the Superintendent setting up a study committee composed of students, parents, teachers and administrators to develop a more detailed code in this area. The net result of this total involvement of the educational community at Evanston was that their guidelines defined the nature of the institution, as well as the needs of its members. The rules defined the rights of students as well as their responsibilities.

The student government should be involved in meaningful decision-making regarding curriculum, instruction, as well as discipline. Since the most effective discipline is self-discipline, such matters as dress codes, policing of corridors, should be delegated to the student council. We do not see why the student council could not be involved in policymaking, relating to matters not specifically dealt with in state regulations, especially matters relating to the internal operation of the school. All this would provide valuable learning experience that would expose students to democratic government and aid them in their development as mature individuals.

Discipline

The school should spell out quite clearly all regulations which specify appropriate or inappropriate student behavior. For example, "insubordination" should be operationally defined, so that students will know exactly what it constitutes. In all instances of rule infraction, students should have the right of "due process' in order to insure fair and impartial judgment of the matter. No penalty, other than that specified in the regulations, should be imposed. The student should also have the right to appeal.

We have already called attention to the fact that the concept of "in loco parentis" is becoming untenable. It is very likely

that the courts will use the Gault decision (giving juvenile delinquents the same protection as adult defendants) as the basis on which they may hand down judgment in related school cases. It is quite possible that the stated criterion as to whether a school regulation is enforceable may be that such a regulation bears directly on the health and safety of the students in the school, and not on any vaguely defined concept of morality or propriety accepted by school officials.

This will mean (we repeat) that standards of dress and of personal adornment are matters which, by their nature, lie outside the scope of the school's authority. These are matters that should be left to parental action or to the students themselves. As long as the student is not endangering his health and safety (but is merely expressing his personal preference) by his dress, hairstyle, and so forth, his freedom seems to be guaranteed under the First Amendment.

In fairness, however, we need to point out that while the majority of court decisions have been made in favor of the students, there are instances in which the authority of the school has been upheld. It will be sufficient to cite two such instances.

In the first case, three members of a Dallas rock and roll group, whose contract demanded that they wear "Beatle" haircuts, were refused admission to the local high school. In the ensuing litigation, the court upheld the decision of the principal not to admit the three students (Ferrell v. Dallas Independent School District.) The court stated that the state's interest in maintaining an orderly system of education was of paramount importance.

In the case of Shwartz v. Schuker (1969), the court refused to enjoin the suspension of a student from a New York high school. The student was suspended for refusing to surrender to the principal copies of a High School Free Press publication. The student, who had been informed beforehand that he would not be allowed to hand out the material on school premises, emphasized his defiance not only by advising another student to ignore the order but also by showing up in class after the suspension without permission.

In its decision the court held that the student's total conduct went beyond the right to distribute an underground paper; that his behavior exhibited a pattern of open and utter disrespect as well as contempt for the school officials. The court then concluded that freedom of speech is not an absolute right; that the rights of students under the First Amendment need to be counterpoised against the duty and obligations of the state to provide for the orderly functioning of the educational process, and to see that the rights of all students be protected.

These two cases point up the importance of what constitutes disturbance in situations involving students' rights. It is not sufficient that school officials feel apprehensive or fearful that disturbance is likely to occur. The courts will not accept apprehension on the part of say, a principal, as providing justification for actions that abridge the rights of students. Regulations instituted and enforced on the plea that they are for the students' own safety and protection are not likely to stand up in the courts. Also, activities of students which do not upset the order of the classroom, or infringe upon the freedom of other students will, in all probability, be sustained by the courts.

Curriculum

Learning should be more important than grades. It is recognized that some measure of student progress is essential. However, the grade should be a "means" not an "end" in itself. To this end we would advocate that the whole "sorting" and "recording" process be overhauled.

Learning goals could be provided by encouraging students to decide upon some activities of their own choosing, which they would carry out as a group with little or no supervision. In the area of extra-curricular activities, this has been done, namely, in Biology Club, Future Teachers Club, and the like. Free from the fear of grade or examinations, students join in these activities; and the high level of interest and involvement shown by the students is an indication of how meaningful

such activities are to them. We suggest that the areas of such informal means of learning be widened. We also suggest that a student's grade should not be a factor as to whether or not he should be permitted to participate in such activities.

We also suggest that students be encouraged to undertake independent research into problems in which they are interested. "Original" answers (i.e., answers different from what may be contained in the text) should not be discouraged or rejected, unless the teacher discusses the problem with the student, and helps him to see wherein his answer is unsatisfactory. We feel that such an attitude on the part of teachers will encourage students' interest and help to develop initiative, creativity, and experimenting.

At the present time, the curriculum meets the needs of only two groups: the college-bound and the vocational/business students. We advocate a review of curriculum content in an effort to make the curriculum relevant and meaningful to all groups. A relevant and meaningful curriculum is one that helps students to understand the behavior of themselves and others, to examine their experiences and to draw inferences therefrom. It is a curriculum that would be built around the students' life. Students should be involved in the planning of the curriculum. In this way, they could help to develop programs that are meaningful to them.

One school that has permitted student-participation in curriculum planning offers courses on the Vietnam war, Negro history, student rebellion, and contemporary protest literature. Several schools in strategic urban centers have begun to involve students in instruction through tutorials, student team teaching, and cooperative community action programs (faculty and students) conducted in conjunction with existing organizations in the community.

Examples of these programs are The Harlem Education Program, an independently funded (parent-student volunteer) program, and The East New York Alliance (student-teach-parent) team which conducts surveys, studies education plans, and supplies information to the community in the East New York section of Brooklyn; there is also the Free School at the

Great Neck Senior High School which has an extensive program covering a wide range of non-credit courses, including Modern Geometry, American Indian Culture, Afro-American Studies, Theater, Hebrew, Western Philosophy, etc. Such projects provide various levels of involvement to students who are turned off by what they regard as the irrelevance of much of the formal school program. In addition to the use of community resources, educators might consider fuller utilization of the facilities of educational research centers and laboratories.

Finally, in addition to having students on curriculum committees, there are no insurmountable obstacles to having students as members of school boards. In Dade County, Florida, for example, high school students have served as aides to the school board. The reputed outcome of this experiment is that students learn how the schools are operated, and the school board learns how the students are thinking. However, we are suggesting that students be admitted as full-fledged members of the school board. In this way, the principle of "cooptation" would be at work — students would not only share in the responsibilities of operating the schools but would also derive a valuable learning experience.

A Final Note

The problem of student unrest which confronts school administrators is, at bottom, a problem in the management of conflict and change. In this regard, we would like to emphasize that the necessity for "order" in our schools does not imply a corresponding necessity for absolute and total conformity by all students to arbitrarily imposed standards. A rigid, inflexible school administrator may seek to suppress conflict (student unrest) while resisting any change whatever. Such tactics may succeed for a time; however, the unresolved tensions will build up, eventually becoming uncontainable, and the school will sooner or later experience serious disruptions that may result in a chaotic situation.

School administrators are reminded that:

1. Rules, regulations, and standards relating to school structure and functioning are man-made guidelines; and as such can be modified, changed, or even discarded.

2. Total conformity to established standards is not only impossible, it is undesirable, since change can never occur if individuals are not sometimes free to experiment and innovate. Thus a flexible school administrator will allow, even encourage, the expression of student activism through established procedures. In such a school, student tensions and dissatisfactions will be resolved as they arise; the social system of the school can adjust to new conditions through a process of gradual, orderly change. In the long run, the school will enjoy a higher degree of legitimation in the eyes of its students.

3. The words "control" and "conformity" hold very negative connotations for many individuals. Such persons view "socializing agencies," e.g., the school, as engaging in the process of "forming" or "molding" personalities into a predetermined pattern which they do not want to fit. It would seem preferable that the school stress, instead, such a term as "social responsibility" which implies "self-regulation" by the individual who voluntarily accepts or rejects established social standards and expectations.

In short, the way a school administrator responds to and manages conflict and change will have widespread consequences for the overall functioning and stability of his school.

Footnotes

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